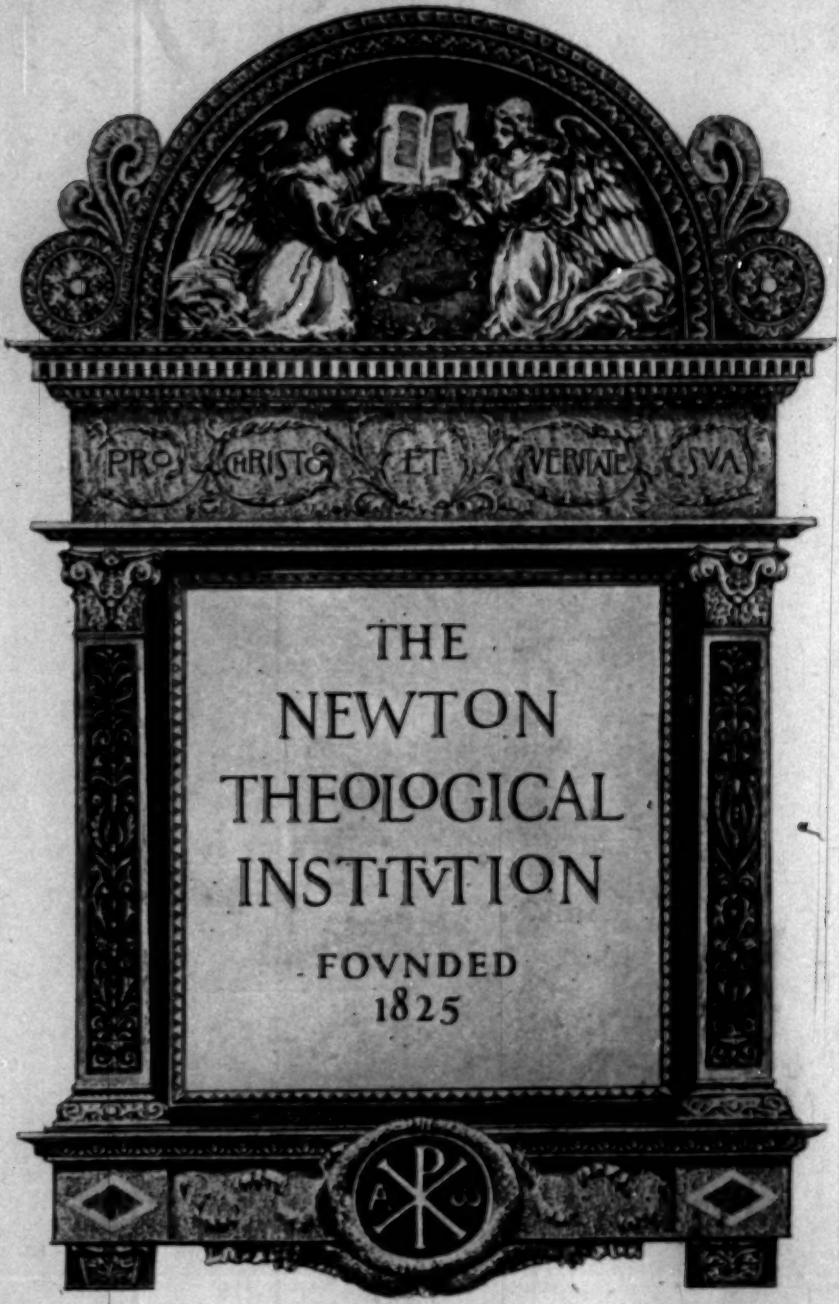
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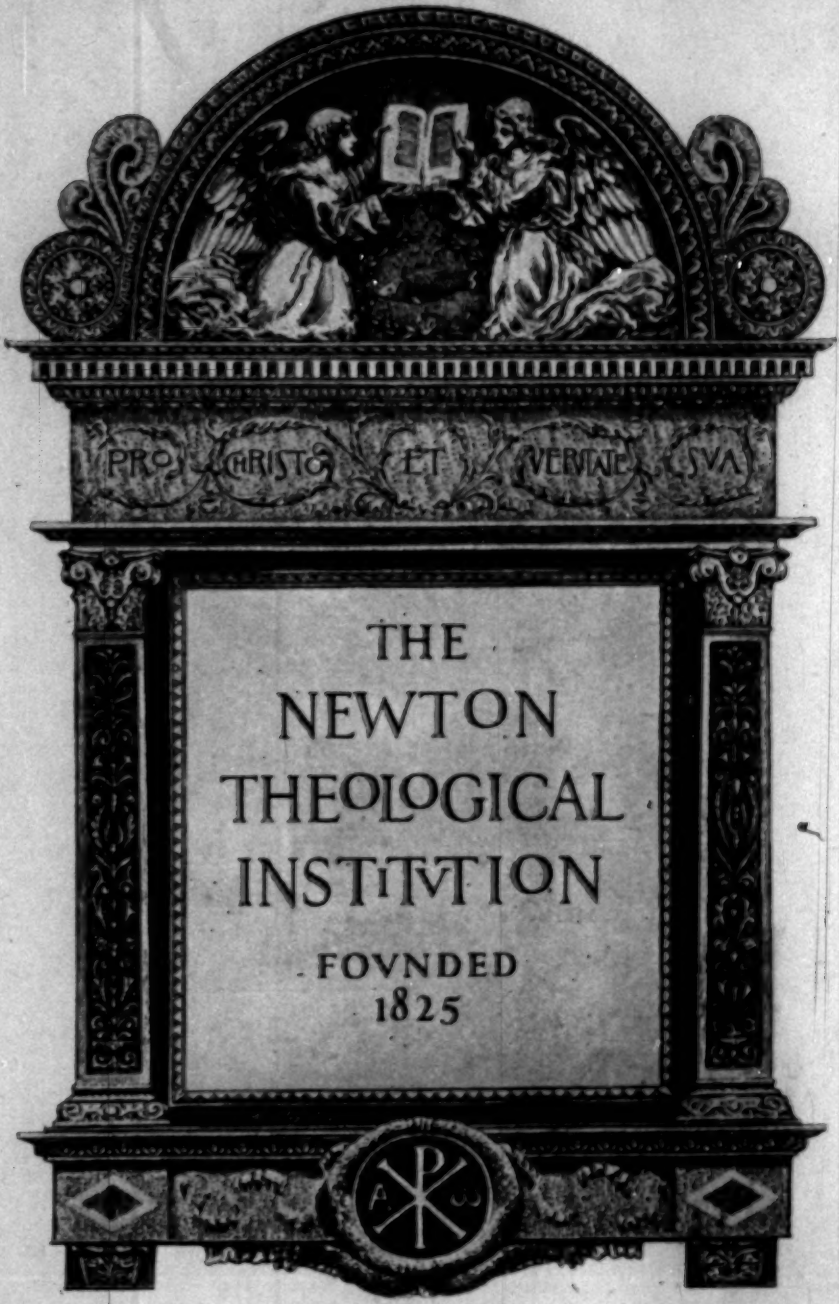
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A LETTER

To the REVEREND

Mr. BENJAMIN LORD,

Of NORWICH;

Occaſioned by ſome harſh Things which he has lately publiſhed againſt Thoſe who have diſſented from his Sentiments about the MINISTRY, the CHURCH, and BAPTISM.

By ISAAC BACKUS,

Paſtor of a Church of CHRIST, in *Middleborough*.

Great men are not always wiſe.——I ſaid I will alſo anſwer my part, I alſo will ſhew mine opinion. JOB xxxii. 9, 17.

But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets. ACTS xxiv. 14.

PROVIDENCE, in NEW-ENGLAND:
Printed and ſold by WILLIAM GODDARD.
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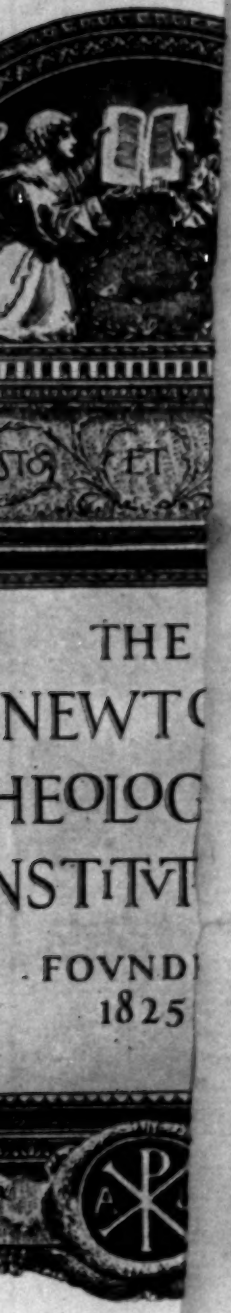

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A LETTER to Mr. BENJAMIN LORD, of NORWICH.

Reverend and Honoured SIR,

TO *do to others as we would have them do to us*, muſt be allowed to be the univerſal rule of equity; yet, alas! how far is it from being univerſally practiſed? and I have thought that it is often as little regarded in the management of diſputes about religion, as in almoſt any affair at all: a view of which has cauſed in my mind, theſe many years, a great cautiouſneſs of engaging in any warm debates: tho' where the cauſe of truth really calls for it, no doubt there is warrant ſtill to appear in it's defence. Such a call ſeems now to preſent itſelf to my view; for as you, Sir, have lately exerted yourſelf conſiderably, to ſupport the cauſe of the churches and miniſtry that are eſtabliſhed by law in our land, ſo you have not failed to repreſent the characters and ſentiments of thoſe who have lately diſſented therefrom, in very odious, and I believe, in very unjuſt colours. In your ſermon at Mr. *Hart*'s ordination at *Preſton*, 1762, you aſſert, that "no "juſt cauſe of withdrawment from your aſſemblies "can be produced," and aſk, "what meaneth this "conduct?" which ſeems to require an anſwer; tho'

tho' you immediately ſay, " I only put the queſtion, " and leave it to CHRIST and conſcience for a de- " ciſion." Page 28.—But if it was left there then, yet you, Sir, and ſix of your neighbouring brethren, have ſo far taken the caſe into your own hands ſince, as that, in a preface which you have added to a new edition of Mr. *Dickinſon's dialogue* about *infant baptiſm*, juſt publiſhed, after mentioning the direction to miniſters, to *blow the trumpet in Zion, and ſound the alarm in the holy mountain*, and then juſt touching upon ſome other evils, which now expoſe us to GOD's judgments, you go on to ſay, " very eſpecially, the " error and iniquity of *going in the way of Cain*, and " following the example of *the gainſaying of Core*, in " departing from GOD's inſtitutions, and without " any ſcriptural warrant, ſetting up ſeparately them- ſelves." Page 4. And in page 7, you proceed in ſounding the alarm, thus, " Do not the late ſepara- " tions, and one ſeparation from another, already " diſcover their nature by their fruits? in that ſome " have by this time apoſtatiſed even from all religion: " while ſome others are renouncing infant baptiſm, " and going faſt to the like dreadful apoſtacy.—It is " hid from them, that *evil men and ſeducers wax worſe* " *and worſe*: it is hid from them, or rather, they will " not ſee that they have fell *into the way of Cain*, and " are in danger of *periſhing in the gainſaying of Core*." Thus Sir, you and your brethren have decided the caſe with a witneſs, and if there was no appeal from your judgment, in your own cauſe, our caſe would be ſad indeed. I ſay *in your own cauſe*; for the whole procedure evidently goes upon this ſuppoſition, that your miniſters are as certainly right, as thoſe were that *Core* appeared againſt, and that your churches in their preſent order, are as certainly right as thoſe which *evil men and ſeducers* departed from in *Paul's* time:

time: and if ſo, then pray who is it that are "in "their own eſteem, holier and better than others." Page 7.

Now as I happen to be one againſt whom this dreadful indictment is laid, for leaving your church, and ſince that infant baptiſm, the law of ſelf-defence will warrant a criminal to ſpeak, before he is condemned; but the nobler principle of regard to the honor of GOD and good of ſouls, even demand a reply, when truth and reformation are repreſented by men of note, as error and apoſtacy, which I believe in my heart is the caſe here. Therefore, without any further apology, I ſhall make a few *remarks* upon ſome paſſages in your late writings, and then give ſome of the ſcripture *grounds* and *reaſons* of my ſentiments and conduct, in the points which you condemn me for; and ſo leave it to every conſcience to judge, whether that is juſtly called the way of apoſtacy or no.

THE firſt remark that I ſhall make, is upon page 18 of Mr. *Hart*'s ordination ſermon, where you ſay of CHRIST, "He was ſent as well as furniſhed, (ſee "*Luke* iv. 18, 19) and ſo muſt we be; elſe the diſ- "ciple covets to be above his maſter; which is the "caſe with thoſe that imagine the fullneſs of the "ſpirit (or ſingular gifts) which they think they "poſſeſs, doth warrant their aſſuming the character, "and entering on the work of miniſters of CHRIST." In this, I ſuppoſe, you have ſome reference to what I have ſaid on that point in my diſcourſe on an *internal call to preach the goſpel*; but I am ſorry you had not ſtated it more fairly. We don't argue that perſons have a warrant to enter into the miniſtry, merely from their having ſingular gifts; but we are of opinion, that thoſe to whom GOD has given grace and ſingular gifts, he commands to improve them:

his

his command is very expreſs, *As every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God*, &c. 1 *Pet.* iv. 10, 11. *Rom.* xii. 6—8. And we believe that the ſpirit of GOD, by light and truth, muſt make that clear to the ſoul, in order for their going forth; and that his teachings and call, gives warrant ſufficient to go upon and improve the gifts which he has given, and that will open the way for their being introduced and ordained in the church of CHRIST. You go on to ſay, "And what great confuſion doth this tend "unto? would it not tend to throw the STATE into "confuſion if any man that would, might ſet up for "a civil magiſtrate, who thought himſelf fit, and "could find a party to encourage and follow him? "and why ſhould it not tend to make the ſame miſ-"chief in the church?" But would Mr. *Lord* have us underſtand that he claims the ſame power in the church, for himſelf and brethren, as rulers have in the ſtate, to give commiſſions to ſuch only as they pleaſe? If miniſters have ſuch power given them, why did *Zion*'s king reprove his diſciples for aſſuming the power of forbidding one to act in his name, becauſe *he followed not them?* and why did he tell them, when at ſtrife about who ſhould be greateſt, that it ſhould *not be ſo among* them, as it was in the civil ſtate?* No doubt but his inſtructions made *Paul* and *Peter*, ſo very cautious againſt *dominion* and *lordſhip* in the church of CHRIST. 2 *Cor.* i. 24. 1 *Pet.* v. 3. We hold to ordination of church officers as well as you; but one main diſpute is about where the right of ordination lies: you, Sir, ſhew a great diſlike againſt the arguments of ſome, as if reaſon were to govern in that affair, (page 23) tho' I think that

* *Mark* ix. 38, 39. *Matt.* xx. 25, 26. *Luke* xxii. 24—26.

that you have ſeveral far-fetch'd reaſonings about it in that ſermon. In general you hold forth, that CHRIST received his commiſſion from his Father, and that he ſent forth the apoſtles, and that they ordained *Timothy* and others, who were to commit the things which they had heard to faithful men, which carries it down to the miniſtry which ſhould continue to the end. Page. 20, 21. And by all your arguing, you plainly endeavour to repreſent, that the common miniſters of our land, have their authority in a line of ſucceſſion thus down from the apoſtles.—Yet ſince them has been the apoſtacy of the church of *Rome*, and then the breaking off from that in the *reformation*; and in our nation, we are told by one of the beſt informed hiſtorians that this country ever bred, that after the nation had been overſpread with *popery* and cruelty in *Mary*'s days, and queen *Elizabeth* was advanced in her ſtead, that on "*December* 15, 1559, "Dr. *Parker* was conſecrated archbiſhop of *Canter-* "*bury*, by three *deprived* biſhops: then they conſe- "crate the reſt." Mr. *Prince*'s *New-England*'s Chronology, page 98. From thoſe *deprived* biſhops then, the church of *England* miniſters derive their ſucceſſion; and they afterwards uſed their power ſo as to ſilence and deprive many of the beſt miniſters in the nation, for not conforming to their corrupt ways. Numbers of theſe came over and ſettled this country: and as cenſures and deprivations plainly take away all the authority which was given by them that lay on the cenſure; ſo it ſeems that our fathers did not pretend to act by any power derived from the *biſhops*; but the firſt miniſters in *Salem*, *Boſton*, and many other places, were ordained by their churches. See *Prince*'s Chronology, page 189, and Vol. II. pag. 73. Yea, we have often been told (and I believe truly) that Mr. *Fitch*, the firſt miniſter of that church which you,

Sir,

Sir, now ſtand paſtor of, was ordained by the church; the two deacons being appointed by them to perform that work. And the *Cambridge* platform, and other writings, ſo plainly expreſs it, that I can't think you will deny that they held the right of ordination to be in the church. And if it is now ſuppoſed that they erred therein, yet which way will they that derive their ſucceſſion from them, make out a whole line clear back to the apoſtles? if you don't like that reaſon ſhould govern in this caſe, would you have us throw reaſon away ſo much, as to believe groſs abſurdities to be conſiſtent truths? But if this is not enough, the truths which are given into in Mr. *Hart's* ordination ſermon, are quite ſufficient to ſhew the inconſiſtency of imagining that miniſterial authority is derived by an external line of an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of regular ordinations down from the apoſtles. For (1.) you obſerve, that the ſcriptures determine that *biſhops* and *preſbyters*, or *elders*, are the ſame. Page 20. Well then, ſurely the *lord biſhops*, which claim ſo much ſuperiority over the *preſbyters*, and act ſingle in ordinations, are beſide the ſcripture line, and therefore can't tranſmit that line down to others.

(2.) You obſerve of miniſters, that "In the diſcharge of this miniſtry given to them, they muſt "uſe the very word of reconciliation committed to "them.—An embaſſador ſent by a prince, muſt "keep to his orders, ſpeak the very mind of his "employer, and not go a ſtep beſide his will; for, "then he is beſide his buſineſs, acts out of character, and without commiſſion. So here, CHRIST's "embaſſadors derive their commiſſion from him, not "from the church; not from the ordainers, but "from CHRIST only." Page 24, 25.

THIS, Sir, is right; this puts the ſucceſſion where it ought to be, in the line of divine truth, and *every*

one

one that is of the truth heareth Christ's voice. Joh. xviii. 37. But all that are out of that line, *act out of character*, and *without commission*, let them pretend to a deſcent from *Peter* or *Paul*, as much as they will. The ancient commiſſion to teach and baptize, is plainly limitted there, viz. *Teaching them to obſerve all things, whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen.* Matt. xxviii. 20. JESUS never promiſed his preſence with any who turn aſide from the line of truth, let them be ordained how they will: Yea, ſo far from it, that if *Paul*, or an *angel from heaven*, ſhould thus turn aſide, the *curſe* and not the *promiſe* would be the conſequence. *Gal.* i. 8. And where is the *proteſtant* in the world, that will pretend that there has been an uninterrupted ſucceſſion of ordained miniſters clear down from the apoſtles, who have none of them groſsly *perverted the goſpel of Chriſt?*

HAVING thus given ſome brief touches concerning the miniſtry, I ſhall nextly make a few remarks upon what you have ſaid about baptiſm. In your late diſcourſe on *Sober-mindedneſs*, page 16, in warning young people againſt erroneous perſons, you ſay, "Some few, I perceive, begin already to follow ſuch, "and to hearken unto corrupt doctrines, which "tend to their renouncing of their infant baptiſm,— "which you may be aſſured, is a dangerous road, "and often iſſueth fatally; to which purpoſe "might be recited, facts of ancient date in foreign "countries, and in our own, enough to make both "ears to tingle." And in the next page, you refer to the *annabaptiſts* in *Germany*, 240 years ago, whom Mr. *Dickinſon* calls "the madmen of *Munſter*:" But pray, Sir, why are we ſo often referred to them, in this controverſy about baptiſm? when we have in no reſpect a whit more, if ſo much relation to them, as

you have to the *pope* of *Rome*. Were they *annabaptiſts* ?—ſo is he a *pædobaptiſt*. Did they uſe violence to ſupport their cauſe ?—ſo does he, even impriſonment and death, to maintain his :—and let every conſcience judge which party has the greateſt reſemblance to ſuch methods now. You know, Sir, that there have been numerous inſtances of late years, among us, of impriſonments and confiſcations of goods, for no greater crime than refuſing to conform to, and ſupport that worſhip which you are pleading for. I know 'tis pretended that thoſe people at *Munſter*, were the firſt that appeared againſt infant baptiſm ; but that is ſufficiently proved by many to be a groundleſs pretence. Mr. *Croſby*, in the preface to the firſt volume of his *hiſtory of the Engliſh baptiſts*, has produced authorities from *pædobaptiſt* writers, of no leſs than ſeven other different periods of time, which they aſſign for the original of this opinion. Dr. *Gill* has done the like, in his anſwer to Mr. *Dickinſon*'s dialogue ; by which, compared with Mr. *Peter Clark*'s defence thereof againſt him, it appears, not only that many, both of miniſters and people, in various parts of *Germany* and *Switzerland*, ſuffered death for denying infant baptiſm, ſundry years before that affair in *Munſter* ; but alſo, that at ſeveral different times, witneſſes have appeared againſt that practice, clear back to the third century ; and that is the earlieſt expreſs mention thereof, that Mr. *Clark*, with the help of Dr. *Wall*'s famous *hiſtory of infant baptiſm*, has been able to bring. Near the beginning of that century, *Origen* appeared for infant baptiſm, and ſaid that it *takes away the pollution of our birth* ;* but *Tertullian* appeared againſt it. So that we have as early account of that practice being oppoſed, as we have

* *Clark*'s defence, page 111.

have of its being expreſsly mentioned: And no wonder it was oppoſed; for they called baptiſm *regeneration*, thinking, it ſeems, that being *born of water*, intends baptiſm: and if ſo, then that infants muſt be baptiſed, or they could not be ſaved.

PERMIT me therefore, here to inſert the words of Dr. *Barlow*, afterwards biſhop of *Lincoln*:—he, after much ſearch into theſe things, in a letter to Mr. *Tombes*, frankly owns thus, *viz.** "The truth is, I "do believe, *pædobaptiſm*, how or by whom I know "not, came into the world in the ſecond century, "and in the third and fourth began to be practiſed, "tho' not generally; and defended, as lawful, from "the text groſsly miſunderſtood, *Joh.* iii. 5. Upon "the like groſs miſtake of *John* vi. 53, they did, for "many centuries, both in the *Greek* and *Latin* church, "communicate infants, and give them the Lord's "ſupper; and I do confeſs, ſays he, they might do "both, as well as either."

AND as there is no truth in repreſenting that the firſt *baptiſts* began at *Munſter*; ſo, on a careful ſearch, I find, that their character has been exceeding falſely repreſented in our own nation. The chief accounts that the public have had of them, have been from their adverſaries, till about twenty-five years ago, Mr. *Thomas Croſby*, of *London*, publiſhed a hiſtory of them, in four volumes. Therein he has ſhewn, that about the time of the long parliament, Mr. *John Tombes*, Mr. *Henry Jeſſey*, Mr. *Hanſerd Knollys*, Mr. *Vavaſor Powel*, and many others, who had been educated at the univerſities in *England*, and were as pious and ſucceſsful as almoſt any preachers in their day, embraced the *baptiſt* principles, and ſuffered a great deal therefor too, with a courage and patience equal to

* *Croſby*'s hiſtory, preface, page 56.

to any of the witneſſes for CHRIST in that day. And a great part of what they ſuffered was from the *Preſbyterians*, who when they had got the power into their own hands, wrote and acted ſmartly againſt tolerating other ſects: to which Dr. *Watts* evidently refers, when he ſays, * "'Tis a pain and ſhame to our "eyes to look backward upon other times, and to "behold pamphlets written againſt toleration, by ſuch "as are miniſters of the goſpel of peace, that perfect "law of liberty. 'Twas their opinion then, (and they "told the world ſo in print) that *ſectaries* ought to "be ſilenced by the civil power. Now *ſectary* is a "name of broad dimenſions, and has a terrible "ſtretch with it; the long ſcourge would in time "reach all thoſe who differ from the hand that ma-"nages that weapon of chaſtiſement: none muſt be "authorized to preach in any form, but by the ſo-"lemnity of impoſing hands, by a company of autho-"rized men." I wiſh our country was clear of ſuch a temper in theſe days. But to proceed;—thoſe experimental writers *Bunyan* and *Keach*, † whoſe works have been greatly eſteemed by our pious fathers, were of this denomination; and the author of that maſterly piece, *Delaulne's plea for the nonconformiſts*, was a member of Mr. *Keach*'s church, in *London*. Mr. *Thomas Wilcox*, who wrote the *choice drop of honey from the rock* CHRIST, which has been much eſteemed in *New-England*, was paſtor of a *baptiſt* church alſo in that city.

BUT

* Orthodoxy and Charity, page 229.

† Mr. *Keach*, one hundred years ago this very year, was impriſoned, ſet twice in the pillory, and fined twenty pounds, ſterling, for writing and publiſhing a little book; and the two chief points which they condemned in it, were the ſame that we hold about the ſubjects of baptiſm, and an internal call to preach the goſpel. *Croſby*.

But time would fail to ſpeak of many other noble witneſſes and ſufferers, of this perſuaſion, in that land; therefore I will come to the ſettlers in *New-England*;—and I find, that of the two churches which firſt ſeparated in *England*, and then moved into *Holland*, before they came here, one of them, (*viz.* Mr. *Smith*'s church) mainly embraced the *baptiſt* principles, and numbers of them afterwards moved back to *London*, and promoted the ſame there;* tho' their diſſenting brethren treated them very roughly therefor; which diviſions among themſelves were improved then as an argument againſt all the ſeparation from the national church, † "Let us, (ſaid an author then) "look among the ſeparated congregations, and con- "ſider their manifold diviſions, both in *judgment* and "*practice*; and there we cannot but ſee a babel of "confuſion, ſeparating each from other," *&c.* juſt as you argue againſt us now. Dr. *Cotton Mather* obſerves, ‡ that the moſt eminent reformers, in their writings, uſed to repreſent the *annabaptiſts* to be, "an "inordinate kind of men, ſtirred up by the devil, to "the deſtruction of the goſpel, *&c.*—Nevertheleſs, "(ſays he) it is well known, that of later time, there "have been a great many *antipædobaptiſts*, who have "never deſerved ſo hard a character among the "churches of God. Infant baptiſm hath been ſcru- "pled by *multitudes* in our days, who have been in "other points, moſt worthy chriſtians, and as holy, "watchful, fruitful and heavenly people, as perhaps "any in the world. Some few of theſe people have "been among the *planters* of *New-England*, from the "beginning." But after they proceeded to form a diſtinct church of that perſuaſion, at *Boſton*, on *May* 28,

* *Croſby*'s hiſtory, vol. I. page 91, 272. † *Croſby*'s hiſtory, vol. I. page 93. ‡ Eccl. hiſt. *New-England*, lib. VII. p. 26.

28, 1665, he obſerves, that the court enacted ſome laws againſt them: tho' he elſewhere ſays of *Plymouth* colony, which had one ſuch church among them (i. e. at *Swanzey*) that * "there being many good men "among thoſe,—I do not know that they have been "*perſecuted* with any harder means, than kind con- "ferences to reclaim them." And in a late piece, I find, that colony, never made any capital laws againſt the Quakers, as others did.† Here remark; *Plymouth* ſettlers left the national church, and ſuffered for it in their native land; but the *Maſſachuſetts* ſettlers chiefly ſhunned that croſs, till they had gotten on this ſide the ocean;‡ and they were moſt forward to *perſecute* all that diſſented from them here.—And ſo it generally has proved, that thoſe who have ſuffered for conſcience ſake themſelves, are not ſo forward to croud upon the conſciences of their neighbours, as others are.

Now to come to later times, by "facts enough to make both ears to tingle," I preſume, Sir, you don't mean the large donations of *Thomas Hollis*, Eſq; of *London*, to *Harvard College*; nor the liberal gifts of Mr. *Iſaac Hollis*, towards the goſpelizing the *Indians* at *Stockbridge*, whom Dr. *Colman* calls *a pious baptiſt miniſter near London*.§ As to the former of theſe, when the news of his death came over, Dr. *Colman*, preached a funeral ſermon for him, before the General Court in *Boſton*, on *April* 1, 1731, which was printed by their order. Dr. *Wiggleſworth*, and Mr. *Greenwood*, the two profeſſors in the college which bore his name, printed each of them a diſcourſe on the

* Lib. I. p. 14. vide *Croſby*'s hiſt. vol. I. p. 112, 113, 120.

† Account of *Plymouth* church, at the end of Mr. *Robbins*'s ordination ſermon, 1760, page 15.

‡ *Prince*'s Chronology, page 237.

§ Chriſtian hiſtory, for 1743, page 150, &c.

the ſame occaſion; to which preſident *Wadſworth*, wrote a preface. In theſe, Mr. *Wadſworth*, after mentioning of other benefactions, ſays, " But the late " *Thomas Hollis*, Eſq; of *London*, merchant, now gone " to his everlaſting reſt, did in his *donations* to our " *college*, far exceed any other of its benefactors." Mr. *Greenwood* calls him, " that unpararelled benefactor to this *ſociety*:" and Dr. *Wiggleſworth* ſays, that " by his frequent and ample benefactions, for " the encouragement of theological, as well as human " knowledge among us, who are chriſtians of a *dif-* " *ferent* denomination from himſelf, he hath ſet ſuch " an example, of a generous, catholic, and chriſtian " ſpirit, as hath never before fallen within my obſer- " vation, nor ſo far as I now remember, within my " reading." Dr. *Coleman* ſays, " That which is ſin- " gular in the piety and benefits of Mr. *Hollis*, unto " theſe churches, was, that tho' he was not ſtrictly " of our way, nor in judgment with us in the " point of *infant baptiſm*, yet his heart and hand was " the ſame to us, as if we had been one in opinion " and practice with him. And in this let him ſtand " a teaching pattern and example to us, of a noble, " chriſtian, catholic, apoſtolic ſpirit of love; which " makes thoſe that differ in leſſer matters, to receive " one another to the glory of GOD, and a ſhining " teſtimony againſt a narrow party ſpirit, which is " ſo much the diſgrace and detriment of the *proteſ-* " *tant intereſt*; and which ſo early began among the " diſciples of JESUS, and was rebuked by him, even " in *John* himſelf, that apoſtle of love and charity " afterwards, who once ſaid to CHRIST, in a fret of " zeal, *Maſter, we ſaw one caſting out devils in thy* " *name, and he followeth not us, and we forbid him, be-* " *cauſe he followeth not us. But Jeſus ſaid forbid him* " *not.*"

THE

THE doctor goes on to ſhew what it was that fixed and enlarged that generous heart to do theſe things: Says he, "It was ſome account Mr. *Hollis* received "from us, of the free and catholic air we breathe at "our *Cambridge*,—that took his generous heart, *&c.*"* But where is this free and catholic air gone now, when thoſe who embrace Mr. *Hollis*'s ſentiments about baptiſm, are ſtigmatized with the moſt odious characters and names, that ſcripture or hiſtory can furniſh? and that by thoſe who are eſteemed fathers of their country.

THAT there have been bad men in this and other countries, that were called *baptiſts*, I don't ſcruple; and I have as little thought that you, Sir, will pretend any other concerning your own denomination. If ſome of our perſuaſion formerly left family prayer, and a regard to the chriſtian ſabbath, *&c.* which you mention;—ſo many on your ſide perſecuted them with impriſonment and baniſhment: And the late Mr. *Cooper*, of *Boſton*, declares, that "the religion "that allows of, and directs to the perſecution of "thoſe that diſſent from it, wears the mark and "brand of a falſe religion."† And I have great reaſon to think that thoſe perſecutions had a great influence in driving many from the obſervance of many things which were right, that the oppoſite party held. Antipathy has a ſtrange influence on the mind; and to my knowledge, many of the preſent generation have made uſe of thoſe hard dealings, as an argument againſt family worſhip; juſt as others would of their looſe behaviour againſt believers baptiſm: but truth ought to be received for it's own ſake, let who will own, or deny it.

You

* See *Croſby*'s hiſtory, vol. IV. page 217, 218, 222, 226, 229.
† Sermon on *Joſh.* xxiv. 15. page 22.

You, Sir, profeſs a great zeal for the religion of our fathers, and repreſent us as going in the way of apoſtacy therefrom. Bear with me then, while we a little further conſider this charge.

They held, "that every particular church of "Christ is only to conſiſt of ſuch as appear to be- "lieve in, and obey him."* And in admitting members, their cuſtom was, to *confeſs with the mouth*, or verbally to *declare what* God *had done for their ſouls*. *Plymouth* church alter'd from this cuſtom, to writing relations, in 1705.† Some others, I ſuppoſe, did ſooner; and from that, many have got to drop the giving of any relation at all. And as to baptiſm, our fathers held, that none ſhould bring their children thereto, but church members; but when another generation was coming on to have children, and yet many of them had not faith to bring their offſpring, this occaſioned great ſtruggles about the ſubjects of baptiſm, to remove which, a ſynod was called twenty-ſeven years after *Boſton* was firſt ſettled; but that did not do it: therefore another was convened in *Boſton*, in 1662, which adviſed to the receiving of perſons to own the covenant, or what is vulgarly called the half way members; which was readily acceded to by many, tho' *Plymouth* church did not conſent to it till 1731.‡ From that, many have got the other half way now: and what leſs, Sir, are you and your brethren a doing, when you aſſert,§ that the covenant with *Abraham* and his ſeed, is the ſame now, in the *form* and *manner* of it, as it was under the old diſpenſation? I ſuppoſe all allow that the church then was national.

C Further

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* *New-England* Chronology, page 91.
† Account at the end of Mr. *Robbins*'s ſermon, page 31.
‡ Account aforeſaid, page 24.
§ Appendix to Mr. *Dickinſon*'s dialogue, page 1, 2, 3.

Further you aſſert, that " CHRIST eſteemed *thoſe* " *little ones* as *believers*, viſibly ſo. And now is it " Chriſt-like to caſt them off, as if not belonging to " the viſible church ?——Alas ! what are thoſe peo- " ple a doing, who are excluding infants from the " viſible church ?" And after mentioning that text, *Matt.* xvi. 18. *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*, you add, " theſe powers of hell, will by various engines " attempt it; and one of them may be endeavour- " ing to exclude infants from the viſible church and " baptiſm." And paraphraſing a little further, you ſay, " And is not this promiſe, *that the gates of hell* " *ſhall not prevail againſt it*, connected with the cove- " nant made with *Abraham and his ſeed*, to all gene- " rations, ſecuring among the reſt, this part of the " viſible church, *viz.* the infant ſeed of his people ?" If this don't ſavour ſtrongly of a national church, I deſire to know what does? All are infants before they are adult; and if all the infants of profeſſors are *viſible believers*, " belong to the viſible church," and are " part of the viſible church, which are " ſecured upon the rock by CHRIST's promiſe," then how miſtaſten were our fathers, in ſo often declaring that the goſpel church is not national! Indeed, they were not aware, that infant baptiſm laid the foundation of a national church, as now 'tis fully prov'd that it did:--here therefore we part;--we retain the old ſentiments about the church, and the manner of admitting members into it, and drop that point which is of a contrary nature: that point you take, and build quite another church than our fathers had any thought of.

LET it be further obſerved, that the *baptiſts* are often repreſented to be unſound in the doctrines of grace, and you repreſent, that their ſentiments about baptiſm

baptiſm have a dangerous tendency :—but what tendency has it to tell children that they are born in covenant with GOD, and that they are ſecured upon the rock by CHRIST's promiſe? Nay, Mr. *Dickinſon*, in his dialogue, page 30, in order finally to convince his neighbour that our infants are in covenant with GOD, ſays thus, " The covenant of works included " the children of *Adam*,—now then, if *Adam*'s poſte- " rity were taken into, and conſidered as in the co- " venant of works, can you think GOD leaves out " the children of his people from the covenant of " grace?" What! are our natural offspring born in the covenant of grace, as *Adam*'s were in the covenant of works?—where then is the need of being *born again?*"

ONCE more: You, Sir, tell young people that erroneous perſons " make it their buſineſs, by ſome " means, to get their affections firſt, that they might " more eaſily blind their judgment, or flatter their " pride, inflame their prejudice, *&c.*"* But I deſire to know what you are doing in many of theſe paſſages? In ſome of them, while you are expreſſing your affection for children, it ſeems as if you would liken us to *ſavages* that murder families of little ones: as for inſtance, where you ſay, " are they not taking " ſome direct courſe to deſtroy the church, by pluck- " ing up the ſeed of it? like as deſtroying *a nurſery*, " is committing a waſte on *the orchard.*" Appendix, page 2. Now deſtroying a nurſery, and killing of it, I ſuppoſe are the ſame. Let the compariſon then be examined.—*David* was born of religious parents; yet he ſays, he was *conceived in ſin*; and elſewhere he compares ſinners to *thorns*:† well, I preſume, no prudent

* Sober-mindedneſs, page 16.
† *Pſal.* li. 5. 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 6.

prudent husbandman will think his orchard injured, by refusing to transplant a nursery of thorns into it, 'till they are graffted, or changed into apple trees. The application is easy. While therefore you, Sir, speak against others blending the judgment, by inflaming the passions, pray don't do the same thing. I once knew what it was to have my mind held long in suspence about these things, and one great means of it, was such injurious representations as I have mentioned, which caused me to enlarge more upon them: but I will now give you positively a brief summary of the scripture grounds of my present principles and practice about baptism.

And as to *Abraham*'s covenant, in *Gen.* xvii. where all the controversy centers, let it be called by what name it well; yet, this I find is certain, that it included all his household, and that every male therein, whether *born in his house, or bought with money*, were ordered to be circumcised. Accordingly he circumcised himself, his son, and *all the men* of his house; which, I conceive, constituted the old testament church. Well, in *Jacob*'s time, this church went into *Egypt*, where they endured a long season of bondage, 'till by an almighty hand they were delivered; and then the *passover* was instituted, and the rules concerning it were very express, that *no uncircumcised person should eat thereof: but every man's servant that was bought for money, when* he was circumcised, *then should he eat thereof: all the congregation of Israel should keep it.* Exod. xii. 43—48. Here the limits of the church appear to be the same that was given to *Abraham*, and that what qualified for circumcision, did also for the passover; and no room is left to dispute, but that the church was national. This church I followed on to mount *Sinai*, where many other institutions and rules were given to them, and among the rest, a great deal

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is ſaid about the fleſh of perſons being defiled, and made unclean, and concerning the means and manner of cleanſing: and one particular is, that, *If a woman have conceived ſeed, and borne a man-child, then ſhe ſhall be unclean ſeven days—and in the eighth day, the fleſh of his foreſkin ſhall be circumciſed.* Lev. xii. 2, 3. In this, I conceive, is diſcovered the plain reaſon why *Abraham* was directed to circumciſe his ſeed at *eight days old*, and not before; even becauſe he who knew all his works and deſigns from the beginning, knew what precepts and directions he deſigned to give to that church, to ſhew who were clean, and who not: and therefore he ordered it ſo, that none might be circumciſed till they were clean. And the apoſtle ſhews, that thoſe cleanſing of the fleſh, were typical of moral and ſpiritual cleanſings of the ſoul: for, ſays he, *if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer ſprinkling the unclean, ſanctifieth to the purifying of the fleſh; how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, who thro' the eternal ſpirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your conſcience from dead works, to ſerve the living God?* Heb. ix. 13, 14. And ſurely, to be *clean* in this ſenſe, is as neceſſary a qualification for ſpecial ordinances in the goſpel church, as the other was in the *Jewiſh* church.* This will further appear if we obſerve,

* As to that text, in 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. of children's being called *holy*, which is often brought in this controverſy, it appears, that the apoſtle is there anſwering a caſe of conſcience which they wrote to him about, (*ver.* 1.) which was doubtleſs occaſioned by their reading in *Ezra*, x. 3, that the *Jews* were obliged to *put away all the wives, and ſuch as were born of them*, which they had taken of other nations, that were not of their religion. This might naturally cauſe the enquiry, whether they muſt do ſo now or not? The anſwer is, no:—for the unbelieving companion is *ſanctified*, and the children *holy*. So the ſame apoſtle elſewhere ſays, of various creatures, which in *Moſes*'s law were called *unclean*,

obſerve, that when the iniquity of the *Jews* was got to ſuch a height, as to bring upon them the *Babyloniſh* captivity, that GOD did then, by the prophet *Jeremiah*, not only promiſe their return from thence, but alſo declares, that, " Behold, the days come, " ſaith the LORD, that I will make a *new covenant* " with the houſe of *Iſrael*, and with the houſe of " *Judah*: NOT ACCORDING to the covenant that I " made with their fathers in the day that I took " them by the hand, to bring them out of the land " of *Egypt*; (which my covenant they brake, altho' I " was an huſband unto them, ſaith the LORD)---but " this is the covenant that I will make with the houſe " of *Iſrael*;—after thoſe days, ſaith the LORD, I will " put my law in their inward parts, and write it in " their hearts; and will be their GOD, and they " ſhall be my people: and they ſhall teach no more " every man his neighbour, and every man his bro- " ther, ſaying, Know the LORD: for they ſhall " all know me, from the leaſt of them, to the great- " eſt of them, ſaith the LORD: for I will forgive " their iniquity, and I will remember their ſin no " more." *Jer.* xxxi. 31—34.

THIS

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clean, they are *ſanctified* by the word of GOD and prayer. 1 *Tim.* iv. 5. *i. e.* They are, by *the law of Chriſt*, made warrantable for to be thankfully received and improved now by his ſaints; ſo in this caſe, I conceive, he held forth, that if the unbeliever is *pleaſed to dwell* with the believer, that family privileges may be warrantably enjoyed, and family duties acceptably performed, by believing ſouls: *elſe*, if their companions muſt be put away, then their children, as *unclean* things, muſt be put away too. This I take to be the plain ſenſe of the words: for by comparing the various places in ſcripture, where theſe terms are uſed, I find, that the ſenſe of the word *ſanctified*, is ever full as ſtrict as the word *holy*: therefore, if the one does here intitle the children to baptiſm, the other muſt give the unbelieving companion as good a right thereto; which, I preſume, will hardly be allowed by any.

THIS prophecy is expreſsly applied to CHRIST's aboliſhing the conſtitution and ordinances of the *Hebrew* church, and introducing a *better covenant, eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes.* Heb. viii. 6—13. That covenant when they came out of *Egypt*, was made with *literal*, this with *ſpiritual Iſrael:* that was made with *Abraham*'s natural ſeed; this with his ſpiritual children. And I really think, that the chief controverſies among GOD's people, about the ſubjects of goſpel ordinances, are principles cauſed by their not duly diſtinguiſhing between type and anti-type, and between the natural and ſpiritual ſeed of *Abraham*, which *Paul* takes ſo much pains to keep diſtinct. See *Rom.* ii. 28, 29, and ix. 6—13. *Phil.* iii. 3. And as the covenant here ſpoken of, which conſtitutes the goſpel church, is declared to be *not according* to that which was made with the church of *Iſrael*, when they came out of *Egypt*, but a *better* one, may we take a little view of the difference? Some of the excellencies of *this* above *that*, are,—*that* was outward in *their fleſh*; *this* is *written in* the *heart.* Many that were in *that* covenant, had not *eyes to ſee, nor ears to hear:** while *all* that are in this, *know the Lord, from the leaſt to the greateſt.* Great numbers of *that* church *brake* GOD's covenant, and he *regarded them not:* but of theſe, he ſays, *I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their ſin no more.* And let it be particularly noted, that one principal advantage which they had by circumciſion, was that, † *unto them were committed the oracles of God*; and many means were uſed for the converſion of members *within* the church: whereas now, the goſpel is freely *preached to all nations*, and the *lively ſtones*, which are the materials for this *ſpiritual houſe*,‡ which is the anti-type of *Solomon*'s temple,

* *Deut.* xxix. 4. † *Rom.* iii. 2. ‡ 1 *Pet.* ii. 5.

temple, are *prepared without*,* before they are *builded together*, *for an habitation of God, thro'* the ſpirit.† And I believe this is the plain deſign of thoſe words, that *they ſhall teach no more every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord*; even becauſe they *ſhall all know him, from the leaſt to the greateſt*: which ſurely cannot be intended to prohibit public or private teachings, in goſpel times; but that all that are truly in this covenant, do know GOD, and have not that to learn now; and therefore evidences of perſons being in ſuch a ſtate, ſhould ever be carefully look'd after, in order for admiſſion into the church.

EXACTLY agreeable hereto, is the language of the *meſſenger* that came to *prepare the way* of our LORD; for when he ſaw many of the *Phariſees* and *Sadducees* come to his *baptiſm*, he ſaid unto them, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. And think not to ſay within yourſelves, we have Abraham to our father: for I ſay unto you, that God is able of theſe ſtones to raiſe up children unto Abraham.* Matt. iii. 7—9. How plainly does this ſhew, that henceforth *Abraham*'s children are to be reckoned not in a natural, but in a ſpiritual line, even that they are only ſuch as GOD hath *raiſed up* to him, by his creating power? and that fruits *meet for repentance*, are neceſſary to prepare any perſon for baptiſm. And thro' all the accounts that we have of his adminiſtrations of that ordinance, no intimations appear of any children's being brought thereto on their parents right.

WELL, if he gave no ſuch intimations, yet you ſay his maſter did, when he ſaid, "ſuffer little chil-"dren, and forbid them not, to come to me, for of "ſuch

* *Prov.* xxiv. 27. † *Eph.* ii. 22.

" ſuch is the kingdom of heaven." Tho' upon a careful ſearch into this affair, I can find no account who thoſe children's parents were, nor the leaſt hint that this liberty and invitation to *come to him*, was limitted only to the children of believers. No,—but without any ſuch limitation, he ſays, *ſuffer little children to come to me*; and when we have evidence that any, let them be as little as they will, have really *come to Chriſt*, 'tis readily granted that they belong to his *kingdom*, and have a right to the ordinances thereof. And as that call to come to him is not limitted to believers children, ſo neither does he ſay, *all ſuch*, but *of ſuch is the kingdom of heaven*; which, I believe, comprehends theſe two things, *viz.* 1. That the chief of them that ever do come to him, and ſo belong to the kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter, come in their early days. *David*, ſpeaking of the conqueſts of this glorious king, and of his people's being willing in the day of his power, ſays, *from the womb of the morning, thou haſt the dew of thy youth.* Pſal. cx. 3. 2. That none belong to that kingdom but little children, in a ſpiritual ſenſe: hence, 'tis immediately added in *Mark* x. 15. *Verily I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.*

THIS is further confirm'd by *Matt.* xviii. where you ſay, "'CHRIST eſteemed *thoſe little ones* as believers, viſibly ſo;" as if all the little children of profeſſors were eſteemed believers: tho' what the evangeliſt ſays, is, that *Jeſus called a little child unto him, and ſet him in the midſt*, &c.—and he ſaid, *Whoſoever therefore ſhall humble himſelf as* THIS *little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven.* Ver. 2, 4. Which ſhews that *this little child* was a real ſaint. And that he was ſo, is further evidenced by two things; *one* is, that CHRIST ſays the ſame of receiving of him, as he does elſewhere of receiving the

apoſtles, viz. *Whoſoever ſhall receive one* SUCH *little child, receiveth me.* Ver. 5. Matt. x. 40. The *other* is, that JESUS ſays of *theſe little ones* which believe in him, that, *in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father.* Ver. 10. Now the angels are *ſent forth to miniſter for the heirs of ſalvation.* All which proves plain enough, that we ought earneſtly to labour, to ſhew to children the neceſſity of believing in CHRIST, and that many little ones do believe in him: but 'tis ſo far from proving that CHRIST eſteem'd all the natural offspring of his people to be believers, that I really think ſuch a notion is both falſe and dangerous.

AND if we come to the commiſſion, in *Matt.* xxviii. 19. our tranſlation ſays, *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them.* Mr. *Dickinſon* renders it, *diſciple all nations*, and Dr. *Doddridge*, *proſelyte all nations*; either of which plainly carries in it, that there is a work to be done to the ſubjects, before they are baptized: namely, that they are firſt to be *taught*, to be made *diſciples*, or *proſelytes*; (ſee *Joh.* iv. 1.) which is abundantly confirmed by the evangeliſt *Mark*, chap. xvi. 15, 16. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved.* What can be plainer than this is? that CHRIST's orders are to preach the goſpel to all nations, and that he that believeth it, and ſo becomes his diſciple, is to be baptized: but not the leaſt word of direction to baptize any other. And as little warrant (I believe) can be found from the apoſtles practice: for when the three thouſand were pricked in their hearts, and cried, *What ſhall we do? Peter ſaid unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt: for the promiſe is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call.* Acts ii. 37---39.

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HERE let it be obſerved, that what is promiſed, is *the remiſſion of ſins, and the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.*---No, ſays Mr. *Dickinſon*, " it was the promiſe made to *Abraham.*" Well, let it be ſo; but what is that promiſe? why, ſays *Paul*, CHRIST *hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law,---that the bleſſing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, thro' Jeſus Chriſt; that we might receive the promiſe of the ſpirit thro' faith.* Gal. iii. 13, 14. And now, how much difference is there between *Peter* and *Paul?* both ſpeak of the *promiſes*; and the *bleſſings* which both point out, are *pardon*, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghoſt:* likewiſe, both ſpeak of them, not as things which belong to any by nature; but as that which is to be *received* as a *gift:* and one ſays, *repent* and ye ſhall *receive* this *gift*; the other ſpeaks of *receiving* it *thro' faith.* All which beſpeak, that none are heirs of that promiſe, but repenting and believing ſouls; and it is limitted in *Peter*'s words, to *even as many as God ſhall call.* If it be aſked, why then did he ſay, *to you and your children?* I reply, that they had imprecated the guilt of CHRIST's blood on themſelves and their children,* which now lay heavy on their conſciences; therefore he holds forth a remedy equal to their miſery, even that the *gifts* of pardoning and renewing grace are in the promiſe freely proclaimed to them, and to their children, and to all that are afar off; and *as many* as come at the *call* of GOD, ſhall receive theſe great bleſſings: and ſo we read, in *ver.* 41, that *they that gladly received his word, were baptized*; but no hint is given, that any others were baptized but ſuch. The ſame might be obſerved in the other accounts that we have in that book; yea, and that in the very *houſholds* which Mr. *Dickinſon* mentions; for when *Paul* and *Silas* went out of priſon, they viſited the houſe

* *Matt.* xxvii. 25.

houſe of *Lydia*, and thoſe which they found there are called *brethren*, and *they comforted them, and departed.* Acts xvi. 40. Concerning the jailor's houſe, the word *all* is uſed three times; they ſpake the word to *all* that were in his houſe;—*all* were baptized; and he rejoiced, believing in God with *all* his houſe. *Acts* xvi. 32—34. And why that word ſhould include more in the middle, than in the beginning and end of the account, I can ſee no reaſon at all.—And the houſhold of *Stephanus* are called, *the firſt fruit of Achaia*, and had *addicted themſelves to the miniſtry of the ſaints.* 1 Cor. xvi. 15. A pious houſhold indeed! and it muſt be proved, that there were ſome in theſe families that were baptized when they were not pious, before they can juſtly be brought for proof that we ſhould baptize any others now.

I know 'tis ſaid, that tho' we have no expreſs mention of any others being baptized but believers; yet, from *Abraham*'s covenant we have reaſon to think their infants were brought in afterwards, and the demand is often made thus,—"Children were once in covenant, and where were they cut off?" To which I anſwer, when *Iſrael* came out of *Egypt*, one direction which was given to them was, that when a ſtranger would join with them, *all his males* ſhould be circumciſed;* which ſhews what was the plan of the covenant when they came out of *Egypt*: but ſince, God declares, the new covenant is *not according* to that; and the ſpecial difference is, that *all* who are in this *new*, or goſpel covenant, *know* him, *from the leaſt to the greateſt.*† I wonder that any will ſtill perſiſt in that demand.—And ſince they do, I will add one text more, which I was lately pointed to by a friend; *to wit*, the teſtimony of the apoſtle *James*, and the *elders* with him at *Jeruſalem.* When *Paul* returned, and had

had given them an account of his ſucceſs among the *Gentiles*, they glorified GOD, and then told him of a complaint that the zealous *Jews* had heard of him, which was, *That thou teacheſt all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forſake Moſes, ſaying, that they ought not to circumciſe their children, neither to walk after the cuſtoms. As touching the Gentiles which believe,* ſay they, *we have written and concluded that they obſerve* NO SUCH THINGS. *Acts* xxi. 21—25.

NOT only that they ſhould not obſerve the cuſtom of circumciſing their children, but *no ſuch things:* nothing that bore any reſemblance to bringing children into the church on their parents right.

Now, Sir, ſince CHRIST's forerunner warned the *Jews* againſt thinking to come to baptiſm on *Abraham*'s right, and told them they muſt bring forth fruits meet for repentance; ſince CHRIST himſelf, called little children to come to him; but ſays not a word of their being brought to baptiſm before they do come to him; yea, inſtead of that, he in the commiſſion orders that *all nations* be *taught* and *believe* before they are baptized: and ſince, his miniſters, in obedience thereto, baptized thoſe that gladly received the word at *Jeruſalem*; they that believed *Philip*'s preaching at *Samaria*;* and ſuch as heard and believed at *Corinth*,† &c. but no account of their baptizing any but ſuch:—And on the other hand, ſince GOD declares that the new covenant is not according to that which he made with *Iſrael*, when he brought them out of *Egypt*; and that one ſpecial difference is, that all who are in this covenant know him, and have his law written in their hearts; and ſince no cuſtom like circumciſing children on their parents account, was to be obſerved among the believing Gentiles, I dare not follow the multitude in bringing children to the initiating

* Acts viii. 12. † Acts xviii.

tiating ordinance of the goſpel church on their parents faith, let there be as great or good men as there will that do it; knowing that I have but one maſter in all theſe things, to whom I muſt give account. And I believe his orders are, that none ſhould be admitted into the miniſtry but *faithful men, or men full of faith and the Holy Ghoſt*; and that none ought to be received into the church but real believers.

THO' when things are brought up to this point, many ſtart off and ſay, "we can't know who are ſuch, and who not." And if it is replied, that CHRIST ſays, *you ſhall know them.* The queſtion is preſently put, "What! are you *infallible?*" and after putting the word *ſatisfactory* on one ſide, and *infallible* on the other, hot diſputes have followed, which have often been carried to extremes on both ſides, in our days. Yet, after all this noiſe, CHRIST's word ſtands good ſtill; *Give not that which is holy unto dogs*; and, *beware of falſe prophets. Ye ſhall know them by their fruits.* Matt. vii. 6, 15, 16. "Aye, ſay ſome, "if men live ſcandalous lives, we may know them "to be bad men; but if they are moral, we muſt "have charity for them." But I believe that our LORD has given the beſt explanation of this rule himſelf: *For*, ſays he, *every tree is known by his own fruit:—a good man out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth ſpeaketh.* Luke vi. 44, 45. This ſhews, that by *fruit*, he means that which is *brought forth out of the heart*, particularly by *ſpeaking*; which ſurely comprehends a perſon's principles, experiences, and converſation. And tho' by *ſheep's cloathing* or a plauſible ſhew of religion, ſome may impoſe upon GOD's people at firſt; yet he holds forth, that out of the *abundance* of the heart, they will diſcover themſelves.

AND,

AND, dear Sir, if you had closely adhered to this rule, I hardly think you would have told th epublic as you do, that, " the FIRST inquiry should be, are they " ministers of CHRIST's sending? and have theygood " right to act in the capacity of public teachers,"* before we hear them? neither, I presume, would you have signified (as you largely do) that a principal mark of *deceivers*, is, their pretending to greater *sanctity* and *concern for souls*, than the *regular* or *standing ministers*.† As if CHRIST and his apostles, and multitudes of reformers since, did not profess greater sanctity and concern for souls than those who called themselves the regular and standing ministers of their day. Nay, a plea of being the regular and standing ministry, has often been one main pretence by which corrupt men have supported themselves against the power of Godliness. Witness the *Pharisees*, who plead that they were *Abraham*'s children, and *Moses*'s disciples; and the *Pope* that claims a succession from *Peter*, &c. whereas, all ought to be tried by this divine standard; and those that are found by their *fruits* to be *good trees*, should be owned as such; and all that are found by their *fruits* to be *corrupt trees*, we ought to *beware of*, let them have been introduced how they will.

HERE again, 'tis said, " you must not judge."— Permit me then to add a word about that also. And I find that a judging according to rule is required in church government and discipline; 1 *Cor.* v. 12. and so it is about what we read or hear. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, to *judge what he said.* 1 *Cor.* x. 15. And no man ought to be judged *before* we *hear him. Joh.* vii. 51. But, to *judge after the flesh*, and according to outward *appearance*; to judge others for their *motes*, while a *beam* is in our *own eyes*, and for the *same things* that we do *ourselves*, are dreadful evils. *Matt.*

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* Discourse on Sober-mindedness, pag. 37. † Ibid, page 17, note.

Matt. vii. 1—5. *John* vii. 24, and viii. 15. *Rom.* ii. 1. And ſo are the *ſpeaking evil*, and *judging* of *perſons* behind their backs. *Pſal.* l. 20. *Jam.* iv. 11. And *ſpeaking evil of things which they know not*, nor underſtand the nature of. *Jude* x. And a great branch of this evil, is judging pious perſons, becauſe they differ from us in ſome external points, which men may have different ſentiments about, and yet be *received* of GOD. *Rom.* xiv. *Col.* ii. 16. 'Tis exceeding natural for us to think that all who hold ſentiments different from ours, are influenced by bad motives: but this we are cautioned againſt, becauſe none but GOD can *make manifeſt the counſels of the heart.* 1 *Cor.* iv. v. And all breaches of theſe rules, I deſire to condemn and renounce in myſelf and all others.

AND I would intreat you, Sir, to review your cenſure againſt us, and ſee if they can ſtand with theſe rules. Particularly, that charge, that we are "going in the way of *Cain* and *Core*, in departing "from GOD's inſtitutions, and without any ſcriptu-"ral warrant, ſetting up ſeparately ourſelves." Now in order for a juſt view of the caſe, it may be needful to give a brief narrative of facts relating to this affair.

LET it then be remembered, that before that bleſſed revival of religion, which happened about twenty-three years ago, it was generally allowed there had been a great declenſion in the churches of *New-England.* Well, in that revival, great numbers flocked into the churches; of which I was one, tho' not without great ſtruggles of mind, becauſe I thought the goſpel rules about admitting and diſciplining of church members, were not ſo ſtrictly obſerved as they ought to have been; yet, as I ſaw no other way to enjoy the precious ordinance of the LORD's ſupper, I joined with your church; where I continued more than two years, hoping for a reformation; but inſtead

of

of that, the cuſtom was continued of letting ſuch as did not pretend to be converted, bring their children to baptiſm; and of receiving members upon written relations of experiences into the church, which I ever thought to be an unſcriptural way; 'till from that, you obtained a vote to admit perſons without any relation at all, if they did not ſee cauſe to give any. And the church, which was a *garden incloſed*,* ſeemed to be laid as an open field; and when a reformation was urged, many would bring the parable of the *tares* againſt it. And that *field*, which CHRIST ſays is the *world*, was often declared to be the church, and that the *good ſeed* and the *tares* muſt grow together therein till harveſt.† I may here obſerve, it was after the *good ſeed* and *tares* both *appeared* by their *fruit*, that the ſervants were forbidden to gather up the tares: ſo that if the *field* was the church, then thoſe that *appeared* by their *fruit* to be *children of the wicked one*, muſt be let alone therein, till the end of the world. *Matt.* xiii. 26, 29, 38, 39. Another thing I'll mention here, and that is, that tho' liberty for chriſtians to improve their gifts, was allowed for a while, and it was owned that much good was done thereby; yet afterwards an outcry was made of their invading the miniſterial office, and the pulpits ſounded with warnings againſt *lay exhorters*, (as they were pleaſed to call them) and ſundry miniſters who had been greatly engaged in the work of GOD, turned and joined with others that had called it a deluſion of the Devil, and united all their force to cruſh theſe *exhorters*: and the public were cautioned againſt admitting any into the miniſtry, but ſuch as *man had taught* for that purpoſe *from their youth*; yea, tho' they might

* 2 *Cant.* iv. 12.

† Mr. *John Cotton*, preached a ſermon at *Attleborough*, in *January* 1747, againſt the ſeparation, and printed it; throughout which, he improves the parable in that line.

be *better qualified* than others that were then ordained.* While there was hardly a perſon in the land that *man had taught* for that purpoſe, but what might be admitted into the miniſtry if they would: and it was often declared, that the call of the people, with the laying on the hands of the preſbytery, was the call of God. But if any others, from any inward teachings and influence, adventured to preach without that, they were called diſturbers, deluded pretenders to an extraordinary call, *&c.* (tho' they did not pretend to any higher call than what they believed every miniſter ought to have) and when that did not ſtop them, the *ſecular arm* was called in, and ſeveral were impriſoned for no greater crime than preaching the goſpel without the miniſters licence.† And many have ſaid, both then, and ſince, that "if it was not for the defence and ſupport of the civil authority, all our churches and miniſters would ſoon be broke up." A great deal of *force*,‡ has alſo been uſed for miniſters ſupport.

These, Sir, were certain facts; and moſt of them known to yourſelf:—and tho' I am far from juſtifying every ſtep of our conduct, in the manner of our withdrawing, or ſince; yet the principal grounds of our withdraw, I believe, were juſt. *The way of Cain*, according

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* See Mr. *Edward*'s thoughts on that work, in five parts, 1742, page 264, *&c.*—And my diſcourſe on an internal call, page 82, 83.

† One of which was Mr. *Thomas Marſh*, who had, for many years, been a deacon in good eſteem, in the ſecond church in *Windham*.—He was confined in *Windham* goal, from *January* to *June*, 1746. I viſited him there, and found him confined in cloſe priſon, and not allowed the liberty of the yard, tho' ſufficient ſecurity was offered for him; while one Dr. *Holloway* who was put in for murder, in the room over his head, was allowed, with an officer to attend him, to viſit the ſick, in ſeveral parts of the town. This would naturally put one in mind of *Barabas* and *Jeſus*.

‡ 1 *Sam.* ii. 16.

according to your own explanation, was " a depart-
" ing from GOD's inſtitution, and deviſing one of his
" own, which he offered without faith." Well, here was our very difficulty, you would admit thoſe to offer their children to baptiſm, that did not pretend to have *Abel*'s faith, and opened a door for others to come to the LORD's table, without giving the church any account that they had that faith, and in theſe, and ſome other things, you had warped off from the ori-gininal conſtitution of the church; therefore we with-drew from you, holding near or quite to it's firſt principles: and to this day, I may boldly ſay, that our ſocieties in general, hold as fully to the doctri-nal articles of your church, as any in the land; and the only reaſon of my leaving infant baptiſm ſince, was becauſe I found it wanted " the ſtamp of divine inſtitution upon it." And I might ſay the ſame, as to the mode of ſprinkling: for the numerous and plain accounts we have of their baptizing in *rivers*, and where there was *much water*, and of their going *into*, and coming *out of the water*, together with it's being twice called a *burial*, fully ſatisfied me that CHRIST and his apoſtles were baptized by immerſion: and the arguments of ſome to the contrary, appeared to me but weak; and ſo they have to many *pædo-baptiſt* writers too. Dr. *Wall*, who took great pains to prove infants to be ſubjects; yet, as to the ancient mode, ſays, * " Their general and ordinary way
" was, to baptize by immerſion, or dipping the per-
" ſon, whether it were infant, or grown man or wo-
" man, into the water. This, adds he, is ſo plain
" and clear, by an infinite number of paſſages, that
" as one cannot but pity the weak endeavours of
" ſuch *pædobaptiſts* as would maintain the negative
" of

* Hiſtory of infant baptiſm, vol. II. page 291. Vide *Craſby*'s hiſtory, vol. I. preface, page 6.

" of it; ſo alſo we ought to diſown, and ſhew a diſ-
" like of the prophane ſcoffs which ſome people give
" to the *Engliſh antipædobaptiſts*, merely for their
" uſing dipping. 'Tis one thing to maintain, that
" that circumſtance is not abſolutely neceſſary to the
" eſſence of baptiſm; and another to go about to
" repreſent it as ridiculous and fooliſh, or as ſhame-
" ful and indecent; when it was in all probability
" the way by which our bleſſed Saviour, and for cer-
" tain was the moſt uſual and ordinary way by which
" the ancient chriſtians did receive their baptiſm."
So that the way it ſeems he has to ſupport ſprinkling, is by ſuppoſing it not abſolutely neceſſary to keep to the ancient mode in that ordinance. But tho' after *Iſrael* had got fine houſes to dwell in, they likely thought they could keep the feaſt of tabernacles well enough in them, and not take the pains to build *booths*; yet, when their houſes had lain deſolate ſeventy years, thoſe which returned from captivity found it duty to return to the ancient pattern. (*Lev.* xxiii. 42. *Nehem.* viii. 14—18.) And ſo I believe GOD's people will in this caſe, ſooner or later. But to return from this digreſſion.

INSTEAD of our departing from GOD's inſtitutions, the very cauſe of our departing from you, was becauſe of your holding theſe things, which we could not find the ſtamp of his inſtitution upon: from whence I leave others to judge, who moſt reſemble *Cain*, in treating their brethren as he did his brother. Concerning *Core*'s *company*, we read, that they were *famous in the congregation, men of renown:* and they *gainſayed Moſes* and *Aaron*, whom GOD had called to teach and lead his *Iſrael*, and they ſaid, *Ye take too much upon you, ſeeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them—wherefore then lift you up yourſelves*, &c. *Numb.* xvi. 2, 3. Now, who are they in our day that ſay, all the congregation are holy, and that their voice

in calling miniſters, is the voice of GOD? So far are thoſe who eſpouſe an internal call by the divine ſpirit, from lifting themſelves up in this matter, that, I preſume, they could freely ſay as *Moſes* did before this, *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that* he *would put his ſpirit upon them.** But we dare not ſay, that being taught and called of men, without that ſpirit, can make them true miniſters of CHRIST. Let it alſo be obſerved, that *Core* raiſed a mob againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*; but we allow of no ſuch thing, but only deſire peaceably to worſhip GOD according to our conſciences, among ourſelves; believing that CHRIST's church is founded in the *truth*, and ſupported by it,† againſt all the powers of earth and hell. And thoſe that ſtill go on in thoſe churches, which rulers, miniſters and people have often declared, would not ſtand if it were not for the ſupport of the civil authority, we leave in the hand of GOD, praying that he would in his own time, *deſtroy the face of covering caſt over all people*;‡ and cauſe his light and truth to prevail every where.

AND to conclude;—what I aimed at in this letter, was, not a diſpute upon every branch of theſe controverſies; that has been often done already: but to endeavour to ſhew the injuſtice of the reproaches which you have caſt upon us, and upon the truth, thro' us; and to open a little of the true ſtate of the caſe between us; and thro' the whole, to ſhew all proper reſpect to mens perſons, and yet to ſpeak the truth plainly, according to the beſt of my underſtanding. How far I have accompliſhed what I aim'd at, others muſt judge: and if you, Sir, or any others, can convince me, in a friendly way, of any miſtake, I hope I ſhall take it kindly; tho' I am not to be frighted

frighted out of truth by hard names. So desiring you calmly and seriously to review your treatment of us, and of our principles,—and wishing you the best of blessings, I rest, dear Sir, *Yours*, &c.

ISAAC BACKUS.

Middleborough, April 9, 1764.

Postscript.

SINCE I finished the foregoing letter, I have thought so much of one thing, that I concluded to add a little upon it here; and that is, your saying, "Do not the late separations already discover their "nature by their fruits; in that some have by this "time apostatized even from all religion:—while "some others are renouncing infant baptism, and "going fast to the like dreadful apostacy?" Now, Sir, unless you could have shewn, that renouncing the notion of bringing persons into the church and into the ministry, by natural generation, and human instruction and influence; and holding to the necessity of regeneration, and divine teachings and influence in order thereto; (which are the central points of the controversy) I say, unless you could have shewn that these principles had a natural tendency to apostacy, there is not a whit more of justice in this censure, because of the unhappy conduct of some that have been among us, than there would be for a person that was prejudiced against your denomination, to say, "Do not these ministers discover what they are by "their fruits; in that some of them have already "been proved to be whore-mongers and drunkards,

"and

" and others are going faſt in the ſame way ?" But where is the perſon or people under heaven that would be willing to be judged by ſuch a rule ? ſurely there is none. And whether we believe it or no, yet all will be made to know, ſooner or later, that, *with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged : and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.* Matt. vii. 2. Which words, if rightly view'd, would be enough to deter every one from condemning any for their neighbours evils, which they abhor.

THE truth is, that notwitſtanding our many miſtakes and wanderings, (for which we have great cauſe to be humbled before GOD) yet, inſtead of *apoſtacy*, there has been a great *revival* of religion within theſe two or three years, among theſe people that you bear ſo hard againſt, in many parts of the land. I know that two years ago, after ſuch a revival in the north-eaſt part of your town, one that joins with you in ranking ſuch inſtruments as were uſed in that work, with *Core and his company*, declared there, publicly, that, " In times of general ſecurity, Satan finds it " his advantage to ſtir up perſons to falſe zeal, and " ſeeming religion," and that " he can and does often affright many, filling them with terror and fears " of hell."* And when he comes to lay down *marks* to *try the ſpirits* by, he ſays, " I ſhall confine myſelf " to ſuch marks and characters, which, as I appre- " hend, beſt ſuit with thoſe appearances of Satan in " the garb of an angel of light, which of late years " he has aſſumed."† Which plainly inſinuates that the work which had then been among the ſeparatiſts in

* Mr. *Whitaker*'s ſermon on the Trial of the Spirits, preached *March* 17, 1762, page 4.—*N. B.* When ſouls are awakened, Satan often fills them with fears that heaven will not receive them, and ſo would drive them to hell ; but that he ſtirs up the ſecure, and fills them with fears of hell, I believe is far from being true.

† Page 14.

in that place, was a deluſion of Satan: yet after all his inſinuations, take the very marks which he lays down, according to the plain language of ſcripture, without turning them into allegory, (as he ſays many do) *viz.* That the true ſpirit firſt brings light to the underſtanding, ſhewing to perſons by the truths revealed in the word, the moral evil of their hearts and lives, and the abominable nature of ſin as committed againſt GOD, till they find themſelves utterly unable to obey the law aright in one point or tittle. And that it leads men to truſt in CHRIST as he is exhibited in the word, and to reſt upon him there. That it empties men, and makes them become as *little children*, *teachable* and *humble*: yea, and charitable alſo to others. And laſtly, that the true ſpirit teacheth us, that religion conſiſts chiefly in *practice*, i. e. in *holy actions*, ariſing from *holy tempers*, and *divine exerciſes of the heart*. I ſay, according to theſe marks which he lays down, there is abundant reaſon to believe that there has been a glorious reformation, and ſeveral hundred ſouls turned from ſin to GOD, in many parts of *New-England*, within theſe two or three years; and a very great part of it among thoſe which you repreſent as going in the way of apoſtacy. Yea, and ſuch a glorious work is now going on in your own place, which I hope will be a means to convince you, Sir, and others, of their wrong charges againſt us.

FINIS.

ERRATA.——*In page* 21, *line* 15, *for* cleanſing *read* cleanſings. *Page* 31, *line* 17, *for* plead *read* pleaded. *Page* 32, *line* 17, *for* cenſure *read* cenſures.——*Theſe errors, and ſuch others as may have eſcaped unobſerved, the candid reader is requeſted to rectify with his pen.*

With this Letter may be had of Philip Freeman, *Bookſeller, in* Union-Street, Boſton;

THE Divine Right of Infant Baptiſm, examined and diſprov'd:—Being an Anſwer to Mr. *Dickinſon's* Dialogue on that Subject. By JOHN GILL, D. D.

And alſo his Reply to Mr. *Clark's* defence thereof.